

City of Takoma Park Maryland **EXISTING DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES**

Development within the City of Takoma Park Maryland, be it privately or publicly initiated, is governed by a number of guidelines and standards adopted or enacted by the Takoma Park Council, the Montgomery County Council, and the State of Maryland. The application of such guidelines, and the process by which development proposals are reviewed, varies depending upon the scope of the project, its location, and the initiating party.

The principal standards used to evaluate proposed developments include the Takoma Park Master Plan, the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance, and the State of Maryland's Principles of Smart Growth. Additional standards or guidelines may, depending upon the nature of the project, be considered: Guidelines for Construction and Renovation in Takoma Park: Creating a Sustainable Environment, the Takoma Park Master Plan for Historic Preservation City Codes and Ordinances such as the Facade Ordinance, the Tree and Vegetation Ordinance, the Storm Water Ordinance, and other applicable city, county and state codes and regulations.

Takoma Park Master Plan

The Takoma Park Master Plan provides a set of comprehensive recommendations and guidelines for the use of publicly and privately owned land. The document, adopted with community input and after an extensive planning process, reflects a vision of future development in Takoma Park which responds to the unique character of the community within the context of a broader, county wide perspective. The major challenges identified in the Master Plan include the instability of some residential neighborhoods; struggling commercial centers; and disconnected pedestrian and bicycle routes. The emphasis of the plan is on the stabilization of residential neighborhoods, the revitalization of struggling commercial centers, and the connection of pedestrian and bicycle routes.

The Master Plan supports development that furthers the health of existing neighborhoods, assures that commercial centers continue to meet community needs, provides adequate community facilities and parks, and improves linkages between neighborhoods and various centers. General development guidelines included within the Master Plan address the following community priorities:

- Community Preservation, Stability and Character - Supports developments which promote the preservation of existing residential character, encourage neighborhood reinvestment, and enhance the quality of life throughout Takoma Park
- Commercial and Institutional Centers - Encourages the improvement and enhancement of existing commercial centers so that they better serve the needs of local and area residents and people passing through the area.

- Community Facilities, Parks, and Environmental Resources - Endorses developments which support existing facilities and parks, protect environmental resources that contribute to community identity, and provide valuable services and programs.
- Neighborhood Friendly Circulation - Advocates for developments which accommodate local and regional traffic while providing safe, pleasant, and convenient pedestrian access to places people want to go.

The Takoma Park Master Plan, endorsed by the City Council and approved by the County Council, was adopted by the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) in December 2000. Though the document addresses development issues twenty years in the future, the plan is intended to be updated and revised every ten years.

A copy of the Master Plan is included with your packet and may be accessed on the internet at http://www.mc-mncppc.org/silverspring/takoma_park/takomaoverview.shtm

Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance

While the Master Plan shapes the future of the community, endorsing specific types and densities of development, the Zoning Ordinance is the mechanism used to implement the recommendations of the Plan and to enforce adopted standards. The Zoning Ordinance imposes specific conditions on properties within Takoma Park, regulating the use of a particular parcel of land. Adopted by the County Council, the Ordinance is enforced by Montgomery County Permitting Services.

The Zoning Ordinance identifies what type of land uses are permitted within a specific area, regulates the density of development, the location or placement of a structure, the height of buildings, the size, placement and number of signs that may be installed at a given location, and establishes minimum parking standards for specific land uses. Exceptions to the Zoning Ordinance are permitted in certain districts with the prior review and approval of the Board of Appeals. Variances in established development standards may also be given if the property owner can demonstrate that strict application of the regulations are impractical or would create an undue hardship given the unique characteristics of a specific parcel.

Maps denoting current land uses and zoning designations in Takoma Park and a copy of the *Resident' Guide to Zoning of Land in Montgomery County* published by M-NCPPC, are included with your agenda packet. The Zoning Ordinance in its entirety is available on the internet at http://www.amlegal.com/montgomery_county_md/

State of Maryland Smart Growth

Factoring into the review of proposed development projects are the Smart Growth objectives endorsed by the State of Maryland. Initiated in 1997, the goal of the State is to promote developments which enhance existing communities and protect valuable natural resources.

Development projects furthering the Smart Growth objectives of the State provide for:

- mixed land uses
- compact building designs
- creation of a range of housing opportunities and choices
- creation of walkable neighborhoods
- promotion of distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
- preservation of open space, natural beauty and critical environmental areas
- provision of a variety of transportation choices
- development decisions that are predictable, fair, and cost effective
- citizen and stakeholder participation

By promoting the principles of green building design that combine energy and water efficiency, healthy indoor air quality and the use of natural building materials with mixed use neighborhoods, revitalized downtowns, walkable communities, and high density, low impact development, smart growth creates communities that provide environmental, economic, social and health benefits for all.

Guidelines for Construction and Renovation in Takoma Park: Creating a Sustainable Environment

Developed by the Committee on the Environment and adopted by the Takoma Park City Council on November 29, 1999, the *Guidelines for the Construction and Renovation in Takoma Park* are considered in Staff's review of proposed projects. The guidelines mirror, in large part, the Smart Growth standards endorsed by the State of Maryland, advocating for early planning, the redevelopment of existing properties, the limitation of development to infill parcels or areas previously developed, the re-use of existing buildings and building materials, and the protection and enhancement of natural resources.

Takoma Park Master Plan for Historic Preservation / Historic Resources Preservation

The *Takoma Park Master Plan for Historic Preservation*, adopted by the County Council in June 1992, and Chapter 24A *Historic Resources Preservation* of the Montgomery County Code, provide general guidance in the review of developments affecting properties located within the Takoma Park Historic District. Developments which serve to preserve and protect the architectural and historical heritage of the community are encouraged. Projects located within the Historic District are reviewed by the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). A Historic Area Work Permit (HAWP) must be issued by the Commission prior to construction. In acting on HAWP applications, the HPC follows the requirements of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, any applicable guidelines that apply specifically to the historic district in question, and the *Standards for Rehabilitation* issued by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior.

A copy of the publication *Protecting our Heritage: Historic Preservation in Montgomery County An Overview* and the brochure, *The Takoma Park Historic District*, are included with your packet for future reference. Additional information on the development guidelines and procedures used

in the review of projects affecting historic or architectural resources can be found on the internet at <http://www.mc-mncppc.org/historic/index.shtm>

Facade Ordinance

Adopted in October 1999, the *Commercial District Facade Ordinance* regulates building and sign improvements or modifications within the Old Town and Takoma Junction areas. The ordinance sets forth specific design standards for new developments or modifications to existing structures as well as establishing minimum maintenance standards for commercial properties within the area. The standards mirror, in large part, those of the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission and the U.S. Secretary of the Interior. The Facade Advisory Board, comprised of seven appointed members, is responsible for providing oversight of development projects occurring within the area. Their recommendations are forwarded to the Historic Preservation Commission and considered prior to the issuance of a Historic Area Work Permit.

Other Codes and Ordinances

Other City Ordinances considered in the review of proposed development projects - both publically and privately initiated - include Chapter 12 *Tree and Vegetation Ordinance* and Chapter 10 *Storm Water Management*.